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Elizabeth Josselyn Boalt— An Appreciation

ELIZABETH JOSSELYN BOALT, widow of John Henry Boalt, died at Santa Barbara on Saturday, February 10, 1917. A telegram from eastern friends, read at her funeral, contains this tribute to her worth and character: "As lifelong friends of Elizabeth Josselyn Boalt we send this message of love and sorrow, together with our gratitude for the blessed course and peaceful end of a sweet, strong, unselfish, patient, victorious, and helpful earthly life which is now continued in the world invisible."

These expressions of appreciation have a peculiarly vivid

meaning to those who know the details which give them their just foundation.

Judge Boalt's death in 1901 had taken from his wife the companionship of one who had so impressed Robert Louis Stevenson that he said of him that he was "the finest type of the American gentleman he had ever met." The untimely death of their much beloved and only daughter—a woman of great beauty and charm—had been a very severe blow to them both, a blow from which Judge Boalt never recovered.

A little granddaughter remained to Mrs. Boalt, and upon this child she centered her affections. It was when this little girl of ten—the last descendant of their line—was taken away and Mrs. Boalt was left as it were utterly alone, that she wrote me from Europe these words: "I shall not wear my sorrows on my sleeve. My tears shall be shed in the privacy of my own closet. I shall not, during my remaining years, cast a gloom over the happiness of those about me."

Hundreds of friends on two continents can bear witness that Mrs. Boalt lived out her days in strict fidelity to the courageous philosophy which she thus expressed.

She recognized that the best earthly anodyne for sorrow is to be found in mental occupation. She had been an accomplished pianist in her younger days and she turned again to her music. Although some sixty years of age she enrolled in Vienna as a pupil of the celebrated Leschetizky and devoted much time each day to her work. In Rome and Florence she added Italian to her knowledge of German and French.

Like Judge Boalt she found congenial companionship in the society of artists, musicians, and literary people. She traveled extensively, occasionally making long stops in the cities both of Europe and America, where she could enjoy the world's best music with friends who, like herself, were music lovers.

Mrs. Boalt did not talk of her sorrows. On the contrary she radiated cheerfulness and made the world sunnier and brighter for those about her. While she spoke without hesitation in conversation with friends, of her husband, her daughter and her grandchild, this was never attended by a suggestion of selfish grief or pent up emotion. And yet to more than one who knew her well, she has unconsciously betrayed by a pressure of the

hand, or a turning away of the head when some chord was touched, the weight of the burden which she was carrying in her heart.

Elizabeth Josselyn Boalt was born in Hanover, Massachusetts, on the 30th day of June, 1842. Her musical education was completed in Europe. On July 31, 1866, she was united in marriage with John Henry Boalt at Waverly, Massachusetts. More than thirty years ago a mutual friend told me that the Judge and Mrs. Boalt were the real hero and heroine of Howells' charming novel, "*The Lady of the Aroostook*,"—that she and the Judge had first met on a clipper ship when she, as Elizabeth Josselyn and just out of her teens, was on her way to Europe for music, while the Judge, then a young man of about twenty-four, was sailing toward Freiberg to complete his studies as a mining engineer.* A few years since I taxed Mrs. Boalt with this romance and she laughingly and almost bashfully admitted that the clipper-ship part of the story was true enough and that friends were said to have told the story to Howells and thereby to have suggested the plot of his novel; but she added that whether or not he had actually made use of it, she really could not say.

In 1867 Judge Boalt took his bride to Nevada, where they lived until 1871. It was during this time that he occupied the bench of a District Court of Nevada. In 1871 the family moved to Oakland, California, and Judge Boalt entered the practice of the law in San Francisco. They were still living in Oakland at the death of Judge Boalt in 1901, but later on Mrs. Boalt took up her residence in San Francisco, and she still considered San Francisco her domicile at the time of her death.

In 1906 she gave property to the value of one hundred thousand dollars for the erection of the Boalt Memorial Hall of Law. In the same year she created a further trust whereby, subject to a life estate and certain powers of revocation, she transferred substantially all of her remaining estate "to establish and endow a professorship in the Department of Jurisprudence in the University of California, to be known as the 'John H. Boalt Professorship of Jurisprudence.'"

* Judge Boalt's knowledge of mines was of much value to him later in his legal work in mining cases both in Nevada and California.

In 1912, sometime after the erection and dedication of the Boalt Memorial Hall of Law, Mrs. Boalt modified the foregoing provision by permitting a latitude as to the precise chair or professorship so to be established and endowed with the trust fund. By this modification the fund is to remain as a permanent endowment "for such chair or chairs as my said trustees, or their successors, may designate and determine, or, in lieu of such designation, as the said Board of Regents shall determine." And it is further provided that in the discretion of the trustees, or of the Board of Regents, the whole or a part of the endowment may go for or toward "the salary of such person as shall, from time to time, be the Dean of the Faculty of the Department of Jurisprudence." This endowment will approximate two hundred thousand dollars.

It is gratifying to note that in the instrument of the 15th of March 1912, Mrs. Boalt thus expresses herself: "I desire here to record the pleasure and satisfaction that I have found in having contributed to the construction of the Boalt Memorial Hall of Law."

While her public benefactions are well known, Mrs. Boalt guarded from the knowledge of the world her very many acts of private kindness as jealously as she concealed her personal sorrows. It is perhaps enough to say, even now, in this regard that to the knowledge of the writer many persons to whom life has proved a struggle have been helped and encouraged by Mrs. Boalt in very practical and substantial ways. This is particularly true among artists, musicians, and writers of her acquaintance.

She felt that through the medium of the work which would be accomplished for State and Nation within the walls of the Boalt Memorial Hall of Law the ideals of her distinguished husband would live on and on. It is perhaps not too much to say that in the splendid spirit of fortitude shown by Mrs. Boalt in the last twenty years—a fortitude to which she was undoubtedly aided by her husband's sound philosophy of life—the character of Judge Boalt found a memorial even more beautiful than any which it was in the power of architecture to erect.

Charles S. Wheeler.

San Francisco, California.